(12)

January 2, 1918.

COPY

My dear Helen:

It is freezing cold outside, and there is no coal in the house, or an ineffectually small amount. I am sitting in my fur overcoat and am neighbored by a whiskey which I intended to make hot but which my "sterno" lamp succeeded in raising to only a Laodicean temperature. So forgive my fingers if they do not hit the right keys. But inside, in my midmost middle, I am warm enough. Partly because I am in robustious health and boiling with schemes and partly because I am hot under the collar against the crew of camouflaged criminals that rule us from Washington. Oh, there is plenty to keep you warm, if you have any original vitality, and you can go barefoot in the snow and not get such cases of cold feet as you observe everyday among the physically well shod.

I found your letter here yesterday on my return from New York. I went there to spend Christmas with Mother, and then stayed over for a few days to see publishers, revolutionists, and other human nuts, plain and fancy, Max Eastman, Walter Arensberg, Arturo and Carolina. I wanted to see you and had an idea that Polly might bring you to the tea room of the Prince George, where we could have a little talk. But you were not in the telephone book. And other things intervened. We'll do that next time I come to the wicked city, and that will not be far in the future if any of our plans get past the earliest green stage.

As for your writings: "The Invincible Revolution" is right in spirit, and will do good. But you go up in the air and say things that you can't back up, can't make good.

For example, my dear, you say" Read the literature of France, England, Italy, Germany and Russia the last sixty years and you will be convinced" Then you mention a string of people, three of whose names you misspell. And then, how much of the European literature of the last sixty years have you read, or has any one person read? Mighty little. Only a fraction. Don't fly so far. Cut out the tall talk and get to what you know and think and feel.

Your letter to the President might be useful as an open letter to be published in the Call. For the sake of propaganda. But don't send it to the President. It is too much like his own way of thinking! Forgive me for saying that, but it is true. You mess up the specific thing you want to do with a lot of generalities. And you put in impertinent things. For example, "a Bolsheviki mind" Bolsheviki is plural, and you would not say an Englishmen mind. And besides what the dickens do you know about the Bolsheviki? And what have they to do with the trial of Arturo and others for a definite crime under a definite American law? And that Tresca is sweet and lovable has nothing to do with the case, this case or any case.

However at this distance and in a letter written in an arctic temperature, I cannot tell you what to do or not to do with your letter. It is admirable and adorable in spirit, as you are and always have been, but regarded as a useful intellectual production, as something I should like to see over your signature, no, it won't do. When you want to hit, strike straight out in the simplest way, with what you know, added to the plain things that anybody knows nowadays. But don't mix up Arturo's poetry and the Russian Revolution and fake compliments to the Great White Father's "far seeing statesmanship." Unless you want to put those things together in the

spirit of irony. And irony is not your long suit. You don't know that game at all. You should make simple definite naive appeals. The practical effect of the message will be nil. Arturo's friend, Margolis, the lawyer, told me that the whole bunch would be convicted as sure as Fate, that no jury would acquit them now. and that the judge would probably give them long sentences. After the war they may be let out, and it may be in order later to petition the President to pardon them. He has that power. But it is doubtful if he will interfere with court procedure. The fact that you call yourself a friend of these wicked I. W. W. folk indicates that your letter is inspired, that you are a poor innocent victim of their influence. The President is the prize crook of the crowd. He sends a committee to investigate Bisbee, and the commission openly charges the employers with illegal acts. What does the Department of Justice do? Nothing. Wilson could make it move if he wanted to.

I have indicated some changes in the letter, chiefly omissions, and I should change it still further in the direction of simplicity and brevity.

Yours ever affectionately .

John